

Working With Employers

January 2005

WASHINGTON
WorkFirst

What is the role of business outreach in WorkFirst?

WorkFirst has consistently maintained its focus on work and the belief that the surest route out of poverty begins with a job. Without jobs, none of the services WorkFirst provides to help families become self-sufficient would matter.

WorkFirst's business outreach services are focused on building and nurturing relationships with employers willing to hire WorkFirst parents and to give them a chance to succeed. Partnering with business is not only the right thing to do; it is vital to WorkFirst's success.

What services does WorkFirst provide employers?

WorkFirst's connection to Washington's WorkSource centers makes it easier than ever to link employers with qualified WorkFirst applicants. WorkFirst and WorkSource offer services that save business time and money. These include:

- **Personalized recruitment assistance.** WorkFirst and WorkSource business representatives work directly with employers to refer qualified applicants, arrange facilities for interviews, identify training opportunities and offer job readiness workshops. They also provide wage information and help businesses navigate government regulations, including taxes and labor laws.
- **Job fairs and hiring events.** In many communities, employers have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with a pool of prospective job candidates. These events are typically organized and promoted at no cost to the employer.
- **Free job listings.** Businesses can post jobs on the WorkSource Web site and in WorkSource centers and WorkFirst offices at no charge. They can also search applicant resumes. In a number of cities, business representatives further promote these listings through radio and public television announcements.
- **Worker training.** Businesses who take advantage of WorkFirst training opportunities receive a return on their investment by reducing turnover rates and employing a competent, customized and diverse workforce at little or no cost. Training can be customized for firms and offered either on-site or through local community and technical colleges.
- **Tax credits.** The Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit saves businesses up to \$8,500 over two years when they hire a worker who has been in WorkFirst for least 18 months and has worked at least 180 days each year. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit saves businesses up to \$2,400 a year when they hire an employee from eight targeted groups including WorkFirst. In addition, the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit are subtracted from the amount of tax workers owe; employers benefit from these tax credits by being able to "boost" a worker's wages at no additional cost.

- In 2004, seventy-three employers were honored for being outstanding WorkFirst partners by providing jobs, training and advancement opportunities that help strengthen Washington's economy and break the cycle of poverty for families who have made the transition from welfare to work.
- Competitive grants totaling more than \$180,000 were made available to local partnerships in October 2004 through a Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) initiative to bridge economic development and WorkFirst programs.
- CTED and the Employment Security Department partnered in April 2004 to develop a program called "Smart Move" that supports innovative ideas for business connections.
- In 2004 WorkSource launched a six-month marketing campaign targeted to 14,700 businesses throughout most of the state. The campaign produced dramatic increases in brand awareness, positive perceptions of the system and an immediate pool of employer candidates for long-term relationships.



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- **Business seminars.** WorkSource centers sponsor free business seminars to inform employers about available services, labor laws, employee retention and other topics of interest.
- **Promotional opportunities.** Participating in employer panels, job readiness workshops, and “employer of the week” events provides businesses with the opportunity to educate WorkFirst parents about potential career opportunities and work expectations.
- **Toll-free information line.** WorkFirst established a toll-free number, 1-888-734-WORK, for businesses to inquire about services. This resource is provided in partnership with the Seattle Chamber of Commerce.

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For more information about the
WorkFirst program, visit
www.workfirst.wa.gov

**A Job,
A Better Job,
A Better Life**

